

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Charlie Wilson (OH-6) today voted for legislation that would help renovate and modernize public schools in Ohio and around the country.

By a vote of 250 to 164, the House passed the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act (H.R. 3021), which provides funding to states and school districts to help ensure that school facilities and learning environments are safe, healthy, energy-efficient, environmentally friendly, and technologically advanced. The legislation includes \$234,025,300 million in funding for physical improvement projects for Ohio's schools.

"Recent estimates show that America's public schools need hundreds of billions of dollars in funding in order to be brought into good condition," Wilson said. "Educating our children in safe and healthy environments is a priority."

While Congress provided \$1.2 billion in funding for emergency school repairs in 2001, and provided additional resources for schools devastated by Hurricane Katrina and Rita, the Bush administration has not provided direct funding for general school construction in any of its budgets over the last eight years. As a result, schools have been forced to rely mostly on state and local funding for any repair or renovation projects.

Overall, H.R. 3021 would authorize \$6.4 billion for school renovation and modernization projects for fiscal year 2009, and would ensure that school districts quickly receive funds for projects that improve schools' teaching and learning climates, health and safety, and energy efficiency. To further encourage energy efficiency and the use of renewable resources in schools, the bill would require that the majority of funds for school improvement projects meet widely recognized green building standards and would provide states with funds to help schools track their facilities' needs, energy use, and carbon footprints, among other things.

Wilson was also proud to support an amendment to H.R. 3021 that would require all steel and iron used under this Act to be produced in the United States.

There has been growing concern regarding the quality of steel imports from China. In October 2007, the California Department of General Services posted an alert on Chinese steel tubing fabricated for school construction projects that was found to be defective. Additionally, on April 30, 2008, the Congressional Steel Caucus held a hearing regarding unsafe Chinese steel, and established that there are serious concerns regarding the monitoring and safety of Chinese steel imports. Wilson attended the April hearing.

"What I learned was that these products are not being inspected in China. The products are also not inspected when they enter our Ports. And again, the steel is not inspected as it's used to build some of our nation's most critical infrastructure – like our children's schools," Wilson said in a speech he delivered today during debate of the amendment.

Finally, H.R. 3021 would bring immediate benefits to workers in the nation's construction industry – one of the sectors hit hardest by the recent economic downturn – and would ensure fair wages and benefits for workers by applying Davis-Bacon protections to all grants awarded for school improvement projects.

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